

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims.

1. (currently amended) A method of marketing one or more marketable entities to be purchased comprising the steps of:
 - a. providing a referral-based service, by a Service Provider, as part of an electronic communications network and infrastructure, wherein the ~~and~~ one or more marketable entities are goods or services to be purchased, wherein the referral-based service and the one or more marketable entities are provided offered for purchase by [[a]] the Service Provider and any purchase transaction of one of the one or more marketable entities is performed by the Service Provider via the communications network and infrastructure;
 - b. performing a purchase transaction of a marketable entity by a first party using the Service Provider, wherein the purchase transaction is related to a first party purchasing a marketable entity via the communications network and infrastructure;
 - c. offering a reward to the first party, by the Service Provider, via the communications network and infrastructure to the first party by the Service Provider in response to the first party purchasing the marketable entity, the reward is in exchange for a recommendation to a second party regarding the marketable entity that results in a purchase of the marketable entity by [[a]] the second party;
 - d. recommending the marketable entity by the first party to the second party, the recommendation comprising [[a]] the first party forwarding [[of]] a first e-mail message to the second party, the first e-mail message comprising a personalized referral from the first party for the marketable entity, and a first set of data, the first set of data comprising a first serial number and a first URL link to a first Web site of the Service Provider having an offer to transact an exchange for the marketable entity;
 - [[d]]e. correlating, by the Service Provider, the first set of data in the first e-mail message to data within a database within the communications network and infrastructure, the data within the database comprising data relating [[to]] the first party, the reward offered to the first party, and the marketable entity;

- [[e]]f. updating the database with an e-mail address of the second party provided by the first party;
 - g. relating the e-mail address of the second party, within the database, to the first set of data in the first email message, thereby creating a referral lineage;
 - [[f]]h. forwarding the first e-mail message to the e-mail address of the second party; ~~wherein the marketable entity is selected from a group consisting of goods and services; and~~
 - [[g]]i. providing the reward to the first party if the second party purchases the marketable entity; and
 - j. selectively offering a reward to the second party, by the Service Provider, in exchange for the second party recommending the marketable entity to a third party, independent of whether the second party purchases the marketable entity.
2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of forwarding the first e-mail message is performed by an automatic e-mail forwarding program associated with the database.
3. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of updating the database with an e-mail address of the second party is performed through an e-mail field accessed by the first party through a Web browser.
4. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps [[of]]; updating the database with an e-mail address of [[a]] the third party provided by at least one of the first party and the second party; and
relating the e-mail address of the third party, within the database, to at least one of the first email address and the second email address, thereby updating the referral lineage.
5. (canceled)
6. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first e-mail message is configured to comprise a token in the form of a first icon, and the method further comprises the steps of:
- a. submitting the token to a field within the first Web site; and

- b. retrieving a new token from the first Web site, the new token defined according to updated data within the database.
- 7. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of updating the database further comprises the steps of:
 - a. generating a second serial number; and
 - b. updating the database to authenticate the second serial number.
- 8. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of forwarding the first e-mail message to the second party comprises the steps of:
 - a. forwarding the first e-mail message from the first party to the second party; and
 - b. forwarding an authenticating e-mail message from the first party to a provider of the first Web site, the authenticating e-mail message comprising a first serial number and the e-mail address of the second party, the authenticating e-mail message thereby enabling the second party to access the first Web site and transact for the marketable entity.
- 9. (previously presented) The method according to claim 8 wherein the step of forwarding the first e-mail message to the second party and the step of forwarding the authenticating e-mail message to the provider are performed as the result of a single mail command initiated by the first party.
- 10. (previously presented) The method according to claim 9 further comprising the step of entering an e-mail address of the provider into a field.
- 11. (canceled)
- 12. (previously presented) The method according to claim 10 wherein the first serial number comprises the e-mail address of the provider.
- 13. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the step of offering a reward to the first party is performed through a medium selected from a group consisting of e-mail, Web site communication, FAX, pager, telephony, postal mail and hand

delivery.

14. (canceled)
15. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first URL link comprises a unique URL address associated with a privilege of Web access intended for a specific party.
16. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first URL link is a general URL link to the first Web site, and wherein access to the first Web site is secured by presentation of the first serial number.
17. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first URL link is accessible through a token in the form of a first icon visible in the first e-mail message.
18. (previously presented) The method according to claim 17 wherein the first e-mail message further comprises a second icon for accessing a second URL link, wherein the first URL link is addressed to access information about the marketable entity and the second URL link is addressed to access information about a rewards referral program.
19. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. accessing the first Web site by the second party according to the first URL link of the first e-mail message;
 - b. transacting the exchange for the marketable entity by the second party; and
 - c. crediting the first party with the reward.
20. (previously presented) The method according to claim 19 wherein the step of transacting the exchange for the marketable entity is performed online through the first Web site.
21. (previously presented) The method according to claim 19 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. establishing a credit account for the first party within the database; and
 - b. recording to the credit account the reward credited to the first party.

22. (canceled)
23. (previously presented) The method according to claim 19 wherein the step of crediting the first party with the reward further comprises the steps of:
- a. waiting a predetermined time; and
 - b. electronically transferring a monetary reward into a reward target selected from a group consisting of a bank account, checking account, creditor, savings account, IRA, money market fund, and charity.
- 24-26. (canceled)
27. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of offering a reward to the second party in exchange for a referral for the marketable entity.
28. (previously presented) The method according to claim 27 wherein the offer of rewards to the first party and the second party in exchange for recommendations is metered according to an algorithm, wherein the first party is granted a privilege of forwarding a greater number of e-mail messages than the second party, each of the e-mail messages comprising a personalized referral for the marketable entity and a set of data, the set of data comprising a serial number and a URL link to a Web site having an offer to transact the exchange for the marketable entity.
29. (previously presented) The method according to claim 27 further comprising a step of forwarding a second e-mail message comprising a referral for the marketable entity from the second party to a third party.
30. (previously presented) The method according to claim 29 further comprising the steps of:
- a. creating a referral lineage within the database; and
 - b. storing identifiers of referring parties within the referral lineage, wherein the referring parties provide a personalized recommendation for the marketable entity to other parties.
- 31-33. (canceled)

- 34. (previously presented) The method according to claim 30 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. accessing the first Web site according to the first URL link of the first e-mail message;
 - b. transacting the exchange for the marketable entity recommended in the first e-mail message; and
 - c. rewarding select referring parties according to an algorithm.

- 35. (previously presented) The method according to claim 30 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. analyzing data within the database; and
 - b. modifying a referral rewards program.

- 36. (previously presented) The method according to claim 35 further comprising the step of storing data relating to the reward and transaction for the marketable entity in the database.

- 37-39. (canceled)

- 40. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of securing the database, such that the database is accessible to authorized personnel only.

- 41. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. issuing a unique access code to a vendor whose marketable entity is represented within the database; and
 - b. granting the vendor limited access to the database.

- 42. (canceled)

- 43. (previously presented) The method according to claim 30 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. attempting to access the first Web site by an entreating party; and
 - b. evaluating an access privilege of the entreating party to access the first Web site.

- 44. (previously presented) The method according to claim 43 further comprising the steps of:
 - a. determining that the entreating party lacks the access privilege for access to the

- first Web site; and
 - b. denying the entreating party access to the first Web site.
45. (previously presented) The method according to claim 43 wherein the step of evaluating an access privilege comprises the step of examining data selected from a group consisting of the referral lineage within the database and an identifier of the entreating party.
46. (currently amended) A method of marketing comprising the steps of:
- a. transacting a purchase for a first marketable entity by a first party;
 - b. offering a reward to the first party in response to the first party purchasing the marketable entity, the reward is in exchange for a recommendation of a second marketable entity substantially similar to the first marketable entity to a second party wherein the recommendation results in a purchase transaction;
 - c. forwarding an e-mail to a second party, the e-mail comprising the recommendation for the second marketable entity by the first party, a from field populated with an e-mail address of the first party, and a URL link to a Web site having an offer to transact a purchase for the second marketable entity, wherein the first marketable entity and the second marketable entity are selected from a group consisting of goods and services; [[and]]
 - d. providing the reward to the second party if the second party purchases the second marketable entity; and
 - e. selectively offering a reward to the second party in exchange for the second party recommending the marketable entity to a third party, independent of whether the second party purchases the marketable entity.
47. (previously presented) The method according to claim 46 wherein the recommendation comprises a discount for the second marketable entity.
48. (previously presented) The method according to claim 46 further comprising the steps of:
- a. accessing the Web site by the second party;
 - b. transacting the purchase for the second marketable entity by the second party; and
 - c. issuing the reward to the first party.

49. (currently amended) The method according to claim 46 further comprising ~~the steps of:~~
- a. ~~accessing the Web site by the second party;~~
 - b. ~~offering a reward to the second party in exchange for a recommendation for the second marketable entity to a third party wherein the recommendation results in a purchase transaction; and~~
 - c. ~~issuing the reward to select parties according to an algorithm.~~
50. (currently amended) A system for marketing comprising:
- a. means for accessing a database configured for storing data;
 - b. a computer operatively coupled to the database, the computer configured to provide access to the Web;
 - c. means for transacting a purchase for a marketable entity by a first party;
 - d. means for offering a reward to the first party in response to the first party purchasing the marketable entity, the reward is in exchange for a recommendation that results in a purchase of the marketable entity by a second party, the recommendation comprising a forwarding of a first e-mail message to the second party, the first e-mail message comprising a personalized referral for the marketable entity and a first set of data, the first set of data comprising a first serial number and a first URL link to a first Web site having an offer to transact an exchange for the marketable entity;
 - e. means for correlating the first set of data in the first e-mail message to data within the database, the data within the database comprising data relating to the reward offered to the first party;
 - f. means for updating the database with an e-mail address of the second party provided by the first party;
 - g. means for forwarding the first e-mail message to the e-mail address of the second party, wherein the marketable entity is selected from a group consisting of goods and services; [[and]]
 - h. means for providing the reward to the first party if the second party purchases the marketable entity, and
 - i. means for selectively offering a reward to the second party in exchange for the second party recommending the marketable entity to a third party, independent of whether the second party purchases the marketable entity.

- 51. (previously presented) The system of claim 50, wherein the system further comprises:
 - g. means for accessing the first Web site by the second party according to the first URL link of the first e-mail message;
 - h. means for transacting the exchange for the marketable entity by the second party; and
 - i. means for crediting the first party with the reward for the recommendation.
- 52. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising, before the step of providing a referral-based service, evaluating the suitability of goods or services for participation in the referral-based service.
- 53. (new) The method according to claim 1 further comprising computing, by an analysis system in the Service Provider, a cost of rewards provided by the Service Provider to referring parties for the marketable entity.
- 54. (new) The method according to claim 53 further comprising determining, by a policy management system in the Service Provider, whether to continue offering a reward for a referral for the marketable entity.
- 55. (new) The method according to claim 53 further comprising determining, by a policy management system in the Service Provider, the value of a reward offered for a referral for the marketable entity.
- 56. (new) The method according to claim 55 wherein determining the value of a reward offered for a referral comprises parsing the referral lineage of a marketable entity for one or more first parties to determine the total cost of rewards provided to parties in the referral lineage of the one or more first parties for the marketable entity.